

**Commission on Aging
Meeting Minutes
November 19, 2020**

Location: Zoom Call
Time: 9:30a – 12:30p

Members Present	Members Absent
Jean Dinwiddie, Chair	Maritza Rivera
Amoke Alakoye, Vice-Chair	Tho Tran
Beverly Rollins, Secretary	Hillery Tsumba
Ryan Wilson, Budget Officer	
Wayne Berman	Alumni Members
Neal Brown	Austin Heyman
Joyce Dubow	Chuck Kaufman
Stephanie Edelstein	
Mort Faller	Guests
Arunima Ghosh	David Engle, GROWS
Richard Jourdenais	Mary Gies, Senior Legislative Aide to Sidney Katz
Miriam Kelty	
Morris Klein	Liaisons
Karen Maricheau	Jim Resnick, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue
Nanine Meiklejohn	Sara Swarr, Department of Recreation
Ruby Moone	Arlee Wallace, African American Health Program
Karon Phillips	Marcia Pruzan, Age-Friendly Montgomery
Edgar Rivas	
Barbara Selter	Staff
Ann M. Serafenas	Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services
Monica Schaeffer	Shawn Brennan, Department of Health and Human Services
Katie Smith	Patrice McGhee, Director Area Agency on Aging
Mary Sweeney	
Marsha Weber	
Arthur Williams	
Janice Zalen	

Welcome

Chair Jean Dinwiddie welcomed everyone and took roll of all attendees. She announced that the Colonel Brooke Lee Middle School has been renamed in honor of former CoA member, Odessa Shannon, who died in May 2020. Ms. Shannon, who served on the County's Board of Education, was the first African American woman to serve as an elected official in Montgomery County.

Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Updates

Chair Dinwiddie introduced the new AAA Director, Dr. Patrice L. McGhee. Dr. McGhee's appointment was effective November 9, 2020. Ms. Shawn Brennan will continue to serve as the CoA's primary staff contact.

Chief Odile Brunetto made the following comments and updates:

- She thanked the CoA for the testimony that Chair Dinwiddie made before the Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee of the County Council on November 18.
- The number of COVID cases in the County continues to increase. This is of much concern and County staff are expecting to receive additional guidance on how to address the problem this week.
- The County has a contract in place that allows staff to go to private homes to conduct COVID tests. After being contacted these "Rapid Responders" usually visit the homes within 2-3 days, and the test results are available in 3-5 days. Staff are specifically reaching out to individuals who are over age 60, live in high risk residences such as apartment buildings, are of low income, and who cannot get out. These individuals can call 311 and make a connection to get the in-home test.
- The County's 311 number has had an increase in calls since the Pandemic started. Individuals who are calling are in need of all kinds of assistance. A contractor has been hired to research ways to improve service and deal with the increased caseload. Close to 50 percent of the calls are abandoned because of the high volume. The County Council has asked for the contractor's report within 90 days. The County is currently in the process of hiring 20 part-time employees to help with the call overload.
- November is National Family Caregivers month. As a result, Lylie Fisher, facilitator of Montgomery County's Caregiver Support Program, is very busy. She and her staff are trying to help individuals who are isolated, including posting several online videos regarding the needs of caregivers.
- Zoom Health is coming to HHS. Staff are currently considering which employees and services would be most beneficial to address public demand. This service is HIPAA compliant.
- More individuals are taking advantage of the County's online activities. For instance, the popular Bone Builder class is now online and is gaining viewers.
- Technology devices are being provided to individuals in the Public Guardianship and other programs.
- The HHS Committee of the County Council has scheduled a meeting for December 3 that will focus on public health. Among others, Long-term Care Ombudsmen will be testifying.

Update from the African American Health Program (AAHP)

AAHP liaison, Arlee Wallace, reported the following:

- The AAHP is working with the Montgomery County Housing Partnership and one of the activities they are engaged in is hosting COVID testing at three apartment complexes.
- AAHP is working directly with African American families who are in need to provide assistance. They are using Zoom and Face Time and the organization has at least 2-3 calls weekly with individuals who need help with health care.
- AAHP is also involved in the Grab-n-Go meals program by helping with packaging food and distributing it.
- Montgomery County appropriated \$3.3 million for activities for individuals in need in northern Montgomery County. More COVID testing sites have been established and the County is working with churches to reach out. Signs have been placed on buses and a billboard has been set up in Silver Spring.

Ms. Wallace ended her report by noting that more information about AAHP is available at Aahpcovid.com.

Commission on Aging Business

Approval of October CoA Minutes

The minutes of the October CoA meeting were approved.

Budget Report

Budget Officer Ryan Wilson reported that the CoA has \$4,945.11 in its budget.

Nominating Committee Slate of 2021 Officers

Chair Dinwiddie reported that the nominating committee proposed the following list of officers for 2021:

Chair	Barbara Selter
Vice Chair	Eddie Rivas
Secretary	Janice Zalen
Treasurer	Dick Jourdenais

After a call for nominations from the floor, commission members voted, and the proposed slate of officers was approved.

Seniors Today

Chair Dinwiddie reported that, so far, three individuals have expressed an interest in hosting the show. Alumni CoA members, Austin Heyman, Amy Harbison, and Marcia Pruzan, along with current member, Hillery Tsumba, will make up the audition evaluation team. Mr. Heyman has volunteered to host the January show. The new host will begin in February.

Task Force Reports

Dementia, Policing and Racial Equity

Commissioner Karen Maricheau reported that at the Task Force's recent meeting the members reached agreement on how to move forward with the revisions suggested by the Public Policy Committee. Commissioner Katie Smith will work on these revisions. A follow up meeting is scheduled for December 4 and any further modifications, if any, will be discussed.

Social Isolation

Guest and Task Force member, David Engle, reported that at the Task Force's November 9 meeting 21 individuals attended, 16 of which were CoA members. The Task Force hopes to meet again soon and will continue to seek volunteers to determine the project's direction. Mr. Engle and CoA member, Maritza Rivera, are leading the effort. HHS staff person, Tina Purser-Langley is staffing it.

November 12, 2020 Testimony on CoA FY22 Priorities at Joint Priorities Hearing of the Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly

Commissioner Katie Smith provided testimony at the hearing and presented the CoA's list of priorities.

November 16, 2020 Testimony before Gaithersburg City Council on Affordable Housing

The Gaithersburg City Council held a hearing the evening of November 16 to discuss the conversion of the Holiday Inn into mixed-income apartments. Chair Dinwiddie represented the CoA and provided testimony supporting affordable housing for older adults. Eighteen individuals testified in favor of the conversion at the meeting.

November 18, 2020 Testimony to HHS Committee of County Council on CoA FY22 Priorities

Chair Dinwiddie provided testimony and it went well and was well received.

November 18, 2020 Community Recovery Advisory Group

Chair Dinwiddie continues to represent the CoA at the CRAG meetings, convened by County Executive Elrich. Meetings are held approximately every month. Updates are included in the CoA Weekly Newsletter Emails.

Austin Heyman Update

Alumni CoA member, Austin Heyman, reported that for the past 4 months the *Bethesda Beacon* has been running a 1-page ad regarding COVID; there have been no articles for older adults written by the County's Public Information Officer. While helpful, the 1-page ad is not enough, and the publication needs to provide information for the County's older adults like it did in the past. Mr. Heyman stated that he has written several letters to the *Beacon* about this. **Mr. Heyman has also sent letters to the County**

Council, the Public Information Office, and Health and Human Services. What is needed is for County staff, the CoA, and other organizations to push for the articles for older adults.

Guest Speaker

Dr. Jack VanDerhei, Research Director of the Employee Benefit Research Institute, gave a presentation on the status of the Social Security Trust Funds. Ms. Helane DiGravio of the Social Security Administration also sat in to answer questions regarding Social Security benefits. The items that were discussed included:

- Why should the CoA be interested in this topic?
- What are the Social Security Trust Funds?
- How are the Trust Funds financed?
- Are the Trust Funds forecasted to be depleted, and, if so, when?
- What would it cost to keep the Trust Fund solvent?
- What are some possible generic solutions to the Trust Fund problem?
- What will be done and when?
- Key details of the *Social Security 2100 Act*
- What does the depletion of the Social Security Trust Funds mean for the U.S. economy?
- What social programs will be impacted?
- What is President-elect Joe Biden proposing?
- What are the implications of the proposed solutions?

Committee Reports

Chair Dinwiddie reminded the CoA members that all Commissioners are expected to participate on a committee.

Aging in Community

Commissioner Monica Schaeffer reported that the Committee invited Erica Lee, a Marketing Associate from Habitat America, to speak at its November meeting. The topic of discussion was Willow Manor at Fairland, the new apartment building for older adults that is being built in Silver Spring.

Commissioner Schaeffer noted that the second half of the Committee's November meeting was devoted to a discussion of where the Committee is headed, and what its next project will be. The Committee's December meeting will focus on developing a new agenda.

Health and Wellness

Commissioner Brown reported that the Committee is in the process of choosing its next topic. A meeting was held on November 3 that was well attended. Committee members are trying to prioritize and are looking at issues they have researched previously. Items on the table include nursing home regulations, COVID-19 testing, suicide prevention, and other mental health issues. Home-based healthcare will be a priority. Committee members are also looking at the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP)

and other health insurance options. They will be focusing on home-based health care at their December 1 meeting and plan to invite a representative from SHIP.

Public Policy

Commissioner Stephanie Edelstein noted that the Public Policy Committee has been helping with the letters and testimony that Chair Dinwiddie provided to the Gaithersburg City Council and to the County Council regarding affordable housing and the CoA's FY22 budget priorities. Commissioner Ryan Wilson reported that the Committee has also been planning for the annual CoA Legislative Breakfast, and has set December 10, 9A.M.-11A.M. as the date and time.

Invited Speakers for Upcoming Meetings

December 10, 2020: Legislative Breakfast

December 17, 2020: Councilmember Will Jawando

January 28, 2021: Barry Hudson, Director Public Information Office

February 25, 2021: Greenhouse Nursing Homes

A suggestion was made that at the March 2021 meeting a representative from the Home Sharing Project be invited to speak. Another comment was made that possibly the CoA could hold its annual March forum via Zoom call.

Adjourn